

## **Ilithology: the comparative study of birth**

*Tuesday 30, 11:30am to 1pm*

### **Speakers:**

Christine Webb

Lia Betti

Nicole Torres Tamayo

Pierre Frémondère

Nicole Webb

### **Overview :**

Birth is a life history phenomenon of obvious importance in eutherian mammalian species. What happens directly before, during, and after birth impacts the survival of the infant and mother, and the reproductive success of both parental lineages. Understanding the process of birth is therefore fundamental to elucidating the selective pressures that determine individual fitness. Perhaps surprisingly given its evolutionary importance, the study of birth has been largely overlooked in non-human species.

In this symposium, we will introduce the field of comparative ilithology (named for Ilithyia, the Greek goddess of childbirth and midwifery): the study of birth and parturitional behavior across species. Comparative ilithology's scope integrates not only biological but behavioral, social, cultural, cognitive, and affective dimensions of birth. We aim to explore what a new field of comparative ilithology has to offer as a research framework and its potential to spur new avenues of interdisciplinary study. Our workshop will bring together a midwife, comparative anatomists, comparative behavioural ecologists and philosophy to develop our understanding of birth-associated behaviours and shed light on ongoing debates about the evolution of human childbirth.

**Organizers:** Alecia Carter, Christine Webb, Lia Betti